

Terminology Services - Vocabulary Catalog List Detail Report

Terminology Services ID: Radiation Protection Program - Radiation Glossary

Description: Defines radiation-related terms

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Term
<p>11(e)(2) byproduct material</p> <p>Definition: A legal definition from the Atomic Energy Act. The tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium or thorium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content.</p>
<p>Absorbed Dose</p> <p>Definition: The amount of radiation absorbed by an object or person. The unit for absorbed dose is the rad (U.S. unit) or the gray (Gy, the international unit). One gray is equal to 100 rads.</p>
<p>Acute Exposure</p> <p>Definition: Exposure to an amount of radiation all at once or from multiple exposures in a short period of time. In most cases, a large acute exposure to radiation causes both immediate (see radiation sickness) and delayed effects (cancer or death).</p>
<p>Agreement State</p> <p>Definition: A state that has signed an agreement with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) allowing the state to regulate the use of byproduct radioactive material. See, NRC Agreement State Program: http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/state-tribal/agreement-states.html</p>
<p>Alpha Particle</p> <p>Definition: A form of particulate ionizing radiation made up of two neutrons and two protons. Alpha particles pose no direct or external radiation threat; however, they can pose a serious health threat if ingested or inhaled.</p>
<p>Ambient Air</p> <p>Definition: The air that surrounds us.</p>
<p>Background Radiation</p> <p>Definition: Radiation that is always in the environment. The majority of background radiation occurs naturally and a small fraction comes from man-made elements.</p>
<p>Becquerel</p> <p>Definition: Becquerels are the international unit used to measure radioactivity. One becquerel is the amount of a radioactive material that will undergo one transformation per second. Becquerels are not used to measure radiation dose or radiation exposure. The U.S. unit is the Curie (Ci). Acronym: Bq</p>
<p>Beneficiation</p> <p>Definition: The use of milling, flotation, sintering, gravity concentration or other processes to allow the desired mineral to be separated from wastes and used.</p>

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<p>Beta Particle</p> <p>Definition: A form of particulate ionizing radiation made up of small, fast-moving particles. Some beta particles are capable of penetrating the skin and causing damage such as skin burns. Beta-emitters are most hazardous when they are inhaled or swallowed.</p>
<p>Byproduct Material</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive materials left over from the production or use of plutonium, enriched uranium or uranium-233.</p>
<p>Chronic Exposure</p> <p>Definition: Continuous or intermittent exposure to radiation over a long period of time. With chronic exposure, there is a delay between the start of the exposure and the observed health effect, such as cancer, benign tumors, cataracts, and potentially harmful genetic changes.</p>
<p>Contact-handled</p> <p>Definition: A legal definition from the WIPP Land Withdrawal Act. Transuranic waste whose radioactive dose rate is less than or equal to 200 mrem per hour. Workers may directly handle drums of this waste.</p>
<p>Contamination (radiation)</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive contamination occurs when radioactive material is deposited on or in an object or person. A contaminated person has radioactive materials on or inside their body.</p>
<p>Coordinating Agency</p> <p>Definition: The federal department or agency with primary responsibility for coordinating the federal response to a large-scale emergency.</p>
<p>Curie</p> <p>Definition: The curie is U.S. unit used to measure radioactivity. One curie is roughly the activity of one gram of Radium-226. Curies are not used to measure radiation dose. The international unit is the Becquerel (Bq). Acronym: Ci</p>
<p>Decay Chain</p> <p>Definition: The series of decays or transformations that radionuclides go through before reaching a stable form. For example, the decay chain that begins with Uranium-238 culminates in Lead-206, after forming intermediates such as Uranium-234, Thorium-230, Radium-226, and Radon-222. Also called the "decay series."</p>
<p>Decay Products</p> <p>Definition: The atoms formed and the energy and particles emitted as radioactive material decays to reach a stable form.</p>
<p>Decommission</p> <p>Definition: The process of removing a nuclear facility from service. This involves reducing residual radioactivity to a level that permits the release of the property for limited or unrestricted use.</p>
<p>Decontamination (radioactive)</p> <p>Definition: The removal of radioactive material from a structure, object or person.</p>
<p>Depleted Uranium</p>

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<p>Definition: Depleted uranium (DU) is the material left after most of the uranium-235 is separated from uranium-238 and uranium-234 for use in nuclear power. Acronym: DU</p>
<p>Dewatered</p> <p>Definition: Solids or soils are considered dewatered when the free water is removed from the material. Dewatered does not mean dry; the material may still be moist.</p>
<p>Dirty Bomb</p> <p>Definition: A mix of explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive powder or pellets. Also known as a radiological dispersal device (RDD). A dirty bomb is not a nuclear weapon.</p>
<p>Dose (radiation)</p> <p>Definition: The amount of radiation delivered to an object or person.</p>
<p>Dose Rate</p> <p>Definition: The radiation dose delivered per unit time.</p>
<p>Effective Dose</p> <p>Definition: The amount of radiation absorbed by an object or person, adjusted to account for the type of radiation received and the effect on particular organs. The unit used for effective dose is rem (U.S. unit) or sievert (Sv, the international unit).</p>
<p>Emanation Rate</p> <p>Definition: The rate which radon will escape a matrix. Often expressed as a percentage. For soils, typical emanation rates are 20 – 30%; for scale or slag, ~1%.</p>
<p>Epidemiological Studies</p> <p>Definition: Studies of the distribution in a population of disease and other health issues as related to age, sex, race, ethnicity, occupation, economic status, or other factors.</p>
<p>Exposure Pathway</p> <p>Definition: The way in which a person is exposed to radiation. The three basic pathways are inhalation (breathing), ingestion (eating or drinking), and external exposure (from outside the body).</p>
<p>Exposure (radiation)</p> <p>Definition: Radiation exposure, also called irradiation, occurs when radioactive material or a radiation machine emits radiation. You can be exposed to radiation without being contaminated. Having a medical x-ray is an example of being exposed but not contaminated. Many radiation monitors measure exposure rates. The units for exposure are the roentgen (R) and coulomb/kilogram (C/kg).</p>
<p>Fallout</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive material in the air from a nuclear explosion that will cool into dust-like particles and fall to the ground.</p>
<p>Federal Radiation Council</p> <p>Definition: The Federal Radiation Council (FRC) was established to advise the President on radiation matters related to health. These responsibilities and authorities were transferred to EPA when it was established by President Nixon under Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1970. Acronym: FRC</p>
<p>Fission</p> <p>Definition: The splitting of an atomic nucleus into at least two other nuclei with the release of a relatively large amount of energy. Fissioning that occurs without any outside cause is called</p>

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"spontaneous fission."
Fracking Definition: Hydraulic fracturing, also referred to as "fracking," is the process of drilling into host formations (shales and tight sandstones) and injecting fluids and sand under pressures great enough to fracture the rock formations to allow the extraction of oil and gas.
Fuel Cycle Definition: The series of steps involved in supplying fuel for nuclear power reactors. The fuel cycle can include milling, fabrication and use of fuel.
Fusion Definition: A reaction in which two lighter atomic nuclei unite to form a heavier one. Reactions of this type release enormous amounts of energy. The energy of the sun and stars come from fusion.
Gamma Rays Definition: A form of ionizing radiation that is made up of weightless packets of energy called photons. Gamma rays can pass completely through the human body; as they pass through, they can cause damage to tissue and DNA.
Generally Applicable Standards Definition: Requirements that apply to general categories of activities, conditions or sites, rather than any specific situation or place. Under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, EPA has authority to establish "generally applicable environmental standards for the protection of the general environment from radioactive material."
Geographic Information System Definition: A system for linking information to a particular geographical location. A Geographic Information System (GIS) allows users to manipulate and analyze specific provided data. Acronym: GIS
Gray Definition: A gray is the international unit used to measure absorbed dose (the amount of radiation absorbed by an object or person). The U.S. unit for absorbed dose is the rad. One gray is equal to 100 rads. Acronym: gy
Half-life Definition: The time required for half of the radioactive atoms present to decay or transform. Some radionuclides have half-lives of mere seconds, but others have half-lives of hundreds or millions of years.
Health Physics Definition: A scientific field that focuses on radiation protection of humans and the environment.
High-level Radioactive Waste Definition: Highly radioactive materials produced as a byproduct inside nuclear reactors. Other highly radioactive materials can be designated as high-level waste, if they require permanent isolation.
Igneous Definition: A type of rock formed when molten volcanic rock has cooled and solidified.

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<p>Improvised Nuclear Device</p> <p>Definition: A type of nuclear weapon that gives off four types of energy: a blast wave, intense light, heat, and radiation. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, at the end of World War II is an example of nuclear device. Acronym: IND</p>
<p>In-situ Recovery</p> <p>Definition: A process to recover uranium in which fluids are injected into ground water to mobilize the uranium in underground deposits. Extraction wells then collect the groundwater, which is processed at the surface to recover the uranium.</p>
<p>Ion</p> <p>Definition: An atom or molecule that has too many or too few electrons, causing it to have an electrical charge.</p>
<p>Ionization</p> <p>Definition: The process of adding one or more electrons to, or removing one or more electrons from, atoms or molecules, thereby creating ions. High temperatures, electrical discharges, or nuclear radiation can cause ionization.</p>
<p>Ionizing Radiation</p> <p>Definition: Radiation with so much energy it can knock electrons out of atoms. Ionizing radiation can affect the atoms in living things, so it poses a health risk by damaging tissue and DNA in genes.</p>
<p>Isotope</p> <p>Definition: A form of an element that has the same number of protons but a different number of neutrons in the nucleus, giving it a different atomic mass. For example, uranium has thirty-seven different isotopes, including uranium-235 and uranium-238.</p>
<p>Karst</p> <p>Definition: A type of terrain where there are numerous sinkholes and large voids such as caves. Karst is created when water dissolves rocks such as limestone, halite (salt) and gypsum.</p>
<p>Linear No Threshold Model</p> <p>Definition: The assumption that the risk of cancer increases linearly as radiation dose increases. This means, for example, that doubling the dose doubles the risk and that even a small dose could result in a correspondingly small risk. Using current science, it is impossible to know what the actual risks are at very small doses. Acronym: LNT</p>
<p>Low-level Radioactive Waste</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive waste that is not uranium or thorium mill tailings, transuranic waste, spent nuclear fuel, or high level waste. Low-level does necessarily not mean "low radioactivity." Acronym: LLRW</p>
<p>Maximum Contaminant Level</p> <p>Definition: The amount of a contaminant allowed in public drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Acronym: MCL</p>
<p>Milling</p> <p>Definition: Industrial operations that process ores to concentrate desired minerals. According to the Atomic Energy Act, uranium milling is any activity that results in generation of byproduct material during the production of special nuclear material.</p>

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millirem
Definition: The millirem is the U.S. unit used to measure effective dose. One millirem equals 0.001 rem. The international unit is milliSievert (mSv). Acronym: mrem
Mixed Waste
Definition: Mixed waste contains both radioactive and hazardous waste components.
Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials
Definition: Materials found in nature that emit ionizing radiation that have not been moved or concentrated by human activity. Acronym: NORM
Non-ionizing Radiation
Definition: Radiation that has enough energy to move atoms or cause them to vibrate, but not enough to remove electrons. Examples of this kind of radiation are radio waves, visible light and microwaves.
Overburden
Definition: Soil and rocks that have been moved out of the way to get to ore are called "overburden." In areas where there are high concentrations of radionuclides in the rock, overburden may have some enhanced radioactivity, but not enough to mine and process.
Photon
Definition: A discrete "packet" of pure electromagnetic energy that has no mass and travels at the speed of light. Gamma and X-rays are photons.
Picocurie
Definition: The picocurie is a U.S. unit used to measure radioactivity. One picocurie is one trillionth of a curie. Acronym: pCi
Porosity
Definition: The capacity of soil or rock to hold water.
Primordial
Definition: Existing since the formation of the solar system, naturally occurring.
Radiation
Definition: Energy given off as either particles or rays.
Radiation sickness
Definition: A serious illness that can happen when a person is exposed to very high levels of radiation, usually over a short period of time.
Radioactive Decay
Definition: The process in which an unstable (radioactive) nucleus emits radiation and changes to a more stable isotope or element.
Radioactivity
Definition: The emission of ionizing radiation released by a source in a given time period. The units used to measure radioactivity are curie (Ci) and becquerel (Bq).

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<p>Radiogenic</p> <p>Definition: Caused by ionizing radiation.</p>
<p>Radioisotope</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive forms of the same element, with the same number of protons but different number of neutrons. For example, Radium-228, Radium-226, and Radium-224 are radioisotopes of radium. Radioisotopes are a subset of radionuclides.</p>
<p>Radiological Dispersion Device</p> <p>Definition: A mix of explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive powder or pellets. Also known as a dirty bomb. A radiological dispersal device is not a nuclear weapon. Acronym: RDD</p>
<p>Radionuclide</p> <p>Definition: Radioactive forms of elements are called radionuclides. Radium-226, Cesium-137, and Strontium-90 are examples of radionuclides.</p>
<p>Raffinate</p> <p>Definition: What is left behind after the more soluble portion of a material is removed. A liquid from which impurities have been removed by solvent extraction.</p>
<p>Redox Potential</p> <p>Definition: The measure of the tendency of a substance to acquire electrons (chemical reduction). Redox potential is measured in volts (V), or millivolts (mV).</p>
<p>Remote-handled</p> <p>Definition: A legal definition from the WIPP Land Withdrawal Act. Transuranic waste whose radioactive dose rate is 200 mrem per hour or greater. Drums of this waste are handled with special equipment.</p>
<p>Risk</p> <p>Definition: The probability of injury, disease or death from exposure to a hazard. Radiation risk may refer to all excess cancers caused by radiation exposure (incidence risk) or only excess fatal cancers (mortality risk). Risk may be expressed as a percent, a fraction, or a decimal value. For example, a 1% excess risk of cancer incidence is the same as a 1 in a hundred (1/100) risk or a risk of 0.01.</p>
<p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>Definition: An evaluation of the risk to human health or the environment from a hazard. Risk assessments may look at either existing hazards or potential hazards.</p>
<p>Roentgen Absorbed Dose</p> <p>Definition: The U.S. unit used to measure absorbed radiation dose (the amount of radiation absorbed by an object or person). The international equivalent is the Gray (Gy). One hundred rads are equal to 1 Gray. Acronym: rad</p>
<p>Roentgen Equivalent Man</p> <p>Definition: The U.S. unit to measure effective dose. The international unit is sieverts (Sv). Acronym: rem</p>
<p>Shelter in Place</p>

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Definition: An emergency response instruction meaning get inside a building right away. If you can get to a brick or concrete multi-story building or basement within a few minutes, go there.
Sievert
Definition: An international unit used to measure effective dose. The U.S. unit is rem. Acronym: Sv
Slag
Definition: Byproduct left after a desired metal is thermally separated from its raw ore.
Source Material
Definition: Uranium, thorium or any combination of them. Includes ores that contain, by weight, one-twentieth of 1 percent (0.05 percent), or more, of uranium, thorium, or any combination of them.
Spent Nuclear Fuel
Definition: Fuel that has been withdrawn from a nuclear reactor after use. It is still highly radioactive.
Statutory Authority
Definition: Responsibility and authority assigned by law to a governmental organization.
Tailings
Definition: The remaining portion of a metal-bearing ore after some or all of a metal, such as uranium, has been extracted.
Transuranic
Definition: Elements with atomic numbers higher than uranium (92). For example, plutonium and americium are transuranics.
Transuranic Waste
Definition: Waste materials containing elements with atomic numbers higher than uranium (92) at concentrations greater than 100 nCi/g.
Uncertainty
Definition: The inability to know for sure, often due to limitations in data. Identifying uncertainties helps define the limitations of a scientific study.
X-Rays
Definition: A form of ionizing radiation made up of photons. X-rays are capable of passing completely through the human body. Medical x-rays are the single largest source of man-made radiation exposure.
Yellowcake
Definition: The solid form of mixed uranium oxide, which is produced from uranium ore in the milling process. Its color can vary from yellow to orange to dark green. Yellowcake is processed into nuclear fuel.